

The Butler Trail at Lady Bird Lake ANNUAL PROGRAMMING PLAN



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 History and Location

In the heart of Austin is the Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake, a lush, urban path that meanders along the water's edge and passes by skyscrapers, neighborhoods, ball fields and cultural attractions. With more than 4.5 million visits a year, the 10-mile hike-and-bike trail is Austin's most recognized and popular recreational area.

But the Trail is more than a great pathway—it is a place where Austin thrives. For many citizens and visitors, it represents the best Austin has to offer: outdoor recreation; a scenic, natural environment; and a diverse, vibrant mix of people.

The Butler Trail was established in the 1970s. Since then, the City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department (CoA PARD) has exercised responsibility for operating and maintaining the Trail. In 2003, The Trail Foundation (TTF), a 501(c)(3) was formed to enhance the Trail. Since that time, TTF has invested more than \$17 million in various improvements to this public asset, most notably the Boardwalk on the south side of the lake.

1.2 Strategic Plan Alignment

TTF Strategic Plan

In 2019, TTF entered discussions with the City's PARD and Watershed Protection Department (WPD) about expanding its role beyond project development to encompass some aspects of maintenance and operations and activation. Toward that end, in 2019 TTF engaged both the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and ETM Associates to consider its vast potential for the future.

In early 2020, TTF committed to the development of this multi-year Strategic Plan. The plan incorporates input from various consultants, TTF's board and staff, and representatives of the City of Austin. One of the main outcome priorities from this Strategic Plan was to engage the community more fully.

The Trail will always be public parkland and will always belong to the people. To serve our city in all its diversity and strengthen our social fabric, the Trail must be a

welcoming and engaging place for all. TTF, therefore, will improve, maintain, and operate the Trail such that it will provide enhanced and more inclusive user experiences. Design and engagement will employ best practices that promote active transportation, placemaking and community well-being.

A big outcome of this is TTF's work to develop and implement community programming that serves everyone, especially attuned to those who have been historically underserved. Programming will be multifaceted — educational (in terms of arts, culture, history, the environment, health and well-being), health-oriented, and fun to enhance people's health and the overall quality of life of people throughout the community. Trail utilization will be measured, monitored and managed to achieve the dual goals of high levels of utilization and quality users' experiences.

City of Austin SD23 & 2019 PARD Long Range Plan Alignment

Austin's growing population and the popularity of special events in city parks are placing increasing demands on Austin's public park system which we are very aware of. The programming efforts outlined in this plan naturally align with the vision and values outlined in the City of Austin SD23 document, as well as the 2019 PARD Long Range Plan, with particular emphasis on programming that highlights and fosters equity, health and the environment, safety, mobility/connectivity, sustainability, and education.

Through this Programming Plan and our partnership with the City of Austin, TTF seeks to:

- Find a healthy balance between events and public access
- Ensure that neighborhoods have equitable opportunities for cultural and neighborhood-oriented events
- Bring neighborhoods and communities to the table to allow them a formal role in decisions about planning for events in nearby parkland
- Bring new audiences to the Trail, particularly those from traditionally underrepresented communities

2.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2.1 Our Mission

The mission of TTF is to protect, enhance, and connect the Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake for the benefit of all.

Since formation in 2003 as a 501(c)(3), TTF has fulfilled this mission through careful improvements to the Trail's infrastructure and environment, while honoring the original vision of the Trail's founders. In 2003, we formed the Town Lake Trail Foundation to continue the work of the Citizens Committee and ensure that the heart of Austin stays strong. In 2008, inspired by the renaming of the lake, we adopted the name The Trail Foundation.

2.2 Our Vision

The beloved Butler Trail is a natural sanctuary that hugs the shores of Lady Bird Lake in the heart of downtown Austin.

It's a healing place, a place where people go to clear their minds, commune with nature, gather for fun, or stretch their boundaries. It's miles of well-loved places—a place to splash in the lake, push a stroller, spot a heron, hear live music, grab a beer, catch up with friends, ride a bike, run for miles, or just be. It's a place to experience Austin in all its diversity at every stage of our lives. And it's the center of the city's expanding network of connected urban paths. Ultimately, the Trail will extend further eastward and westward along the lake.

It's easy for everyone in Austin to get to. It connects people to nature and us to one another for generations to come.

2.3 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

At TTF, we believe free, equitable and inclusive access to the Trail is vital to the health and wellbeing of our community. Input from our Trail users, donors, volunteers, advocates, and team members is necessary for the Trail to be a welcoming space and to represent the communities we serve. We commit to the following principles and beliefs in our effort to protect, enhance and connect the Butler Trail for the benefit of all.

Guiding Principles and Beliefs

We embrace diversity, equity and inclusion at the center of our daily work and nurture a sense of ownership and belonging for the Trail.

We advance programs and services that create opportunities for all people to flourish and promote a deeper understanding of our differences.

We foster an experience where everyone feels they can bring their unique perspective – visible and invisible – to the Trail, so that they can be their true selves.

We listen, remain curious, try new things, speak openly and act boldly.

We believe these ideals are best promoted by leadership of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities.

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3.0 PROGRAMMING

3.1 Event and Programming Spaces

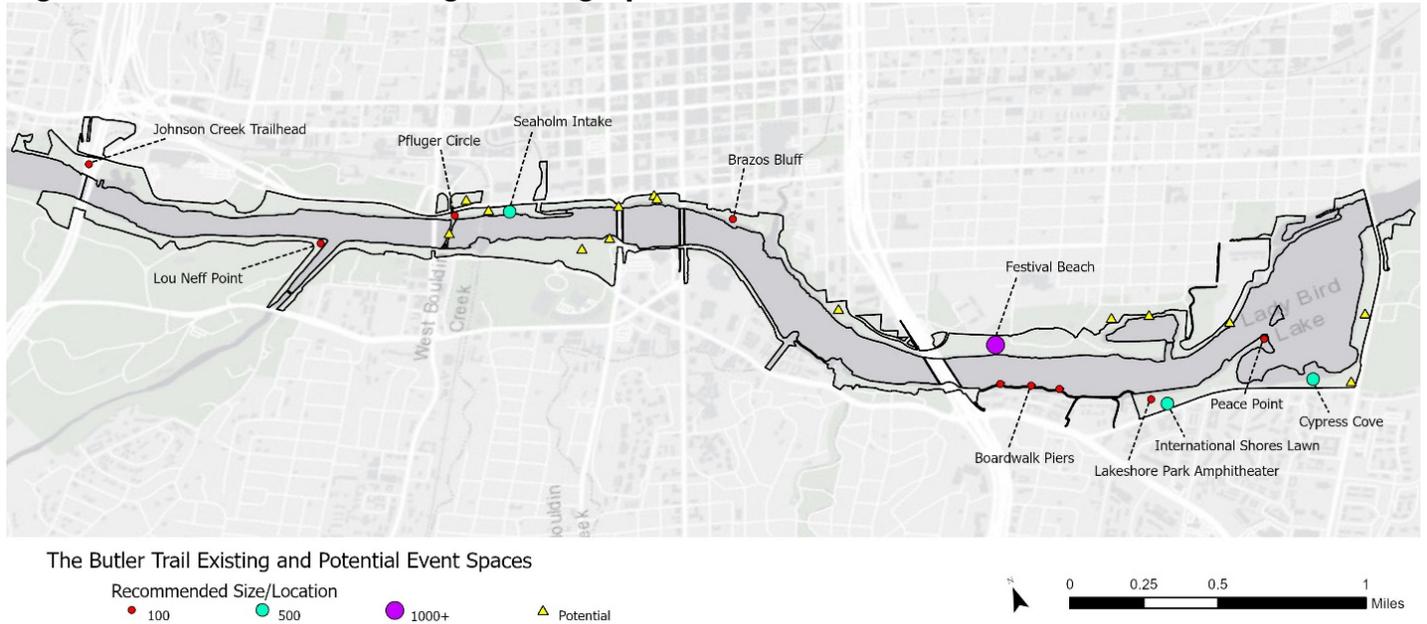
The Ann and Roy Butler Trail at Town Lake Metropolitan Park already plays host to several high profile large Special Events (e.g. SXSW, Austin Food and Wine Festival, etc.). However, there is an opportunity to expand the community programming and event offerings around the Trail by activating other areas that are able to accommodate gatherings. Figure 1 illustrates locations that could be considered for an event based on a recommended event size. Events at these locations would not close or significantly disrupt the access to the Trail.

The areas designated for small events (100 or less) include: Johnson Creek Trailhead, Lou Neff Point, Pflugger Circle, Brazos Bluff, The Boardwalk Piers, Lakeshore Park Amphitheater, Fanny Davis Gazebo, and Peace Point. The areas designated for medium size events (100-500) include: Seaholm Intake Lawn, International Shores Lawn, Butler Shores, Holly Project, and Cypress Cove. The areas designated for large events (1000+) only include Festival Beach. Event designations only refer to the maximum capacity for each site and not planned TTF events in these spaces.

3.2 Proposed Uses and Programming 2021/2022

TTF will never close The Ann and Roy Butler Trail, and in no circumstances does TTF envision a Full Closure of the Town Lake Metropolitan Park (closure definitions can be found in section 5.1 as defined by the 2016 Parkland Events Task Force Final Report) or any of the significant parcels therein. Further, TTF does not currently envision hosting any type of event or programming that would require an “Minimally Open” designation of the Trail or parkland.

The Ann and Roy Butler Trail and Town Lake Metropolitan Park will remain “Open” for almost every day of the year, with an occasional “Partially Open” designation for events that require fencing. During the pilot year, TTF will host 7 or fewer events with the Partially Open designation, meaning that more than 50% of each feature will be open to the public and unfenced at least 358 days a year. Figure 2 details proposed locations, closure levels, and frequency for TTF programming and events.

Figure 1: Potential Event/Programming Spaces

Figure 2: Non-rental TTF Programming Locations

Note: Programming in this chart does not include volunteer days

LOCATION	ACTIVATIONS	CLOSURE LEVEL	EVENT TYPE & CLOSURE LEVEL
Johnson Creek Trailhead	6+	Open	movement, music*, education
Pfluger Circle	4+	Open	movement*, social gatherings, art, music*
Lou Neff Point	4+	Open	social gatherings, music*, education*
Festival Beach	8+	Open	social gatherings*, music*, education, movement*
Boardwalk Piers	6+	Open	music*, art
Fanny Davis Gazebo	4+	Open	music*, art, movement*, social gatherings
Butler Shores	4+	Open	movement,* music*
Lakeshore Park Amphitheater	8+	Open	art*, multi-cultural, music*
International Shores Lawn	4+	Open & Partially Open (<3)	art, multi-cultural, music*
Brazos Bluff	6+	Open (4+) & Partially Open (<3)	social gatherings*, music*, movement*
Seaholm Waterfront Lawn	<5	Open (2+) Partially Open (<3)	first phase lawn use for social gatherings, movement

*Programming with PARD already taking place at this location

3.3 Community Event Series 2021/2022

In addition to earned revenue events, TTF also plans to host the following Community Events in 2021/2022. Some of these will be new pilot programs or events, but most will be an expansion or continuation of current programming.

Those programs and events that are currently ongoing and will continue are marked with an asterisk.

*Volunteer Days

TTF prioritizes a community-based approach to natural areas management and stewardship. The leveraging of volunteer resources in coordination with the expertise of City staff helps amplify the restoration efforts led by TTF's experienced conservation staff. Activities will include mulching, seeding, seed collection, greenhouse work, invasive removals, and a variety of other ecological activities. In 2020, despite the lockdown which prevented volunteer events from occurring between April to October, more than 500 volunteers assisted in the planting of 5,400 plants in addition to over 4,500 trees. The vast majority of these volunteer events were public but also included events with AISD classes, nonprofits such as Austin Allies, and service projects with various community groups. We expect to greatly increase these efforts in 2022 and have an extensive impact tracking system in place to be able to show public benefit.

- Estimated number of volunteer events in 2022: 150-175
- Estimated number of volunteers expected to participate in 2022: 1500

*Living Shoreline Project

The living shoreline restoration project is a collaborative restoration effort on Lady Bird Lake bringing together private and public resources to improve public land through green infrastructure and sustainable restoration. Participating partners include TTF, City of Austin PARD Forestry, City of Austin Watershed Protection Department and local volunteer groups. The living shoreline restoration project at Lakeshore Park aims to address issues across multiple habitat types through a collection of interconnected restoration practices that will maximize ecological benefit.

*Music on the Trail Series

TTF launched the Music on the Trail series in the fall of 2020 in order to bring some of Austin's most beloved musicians to the Trail for popup concerts during a time when it was not safe to gather in traditional music venues. The success of the series allowed for TTF to continue the series in 2021, paying above-market wages to musicians and providing Trail users with an experience that reminds them why Austin is the The Live Music Capital of the World®.

In 2022, TTF will continue to partner with Austin Texas Musicians to book a broad array of genres and groups for this series. Current and past partners in the series also include The SIMS Foundation for Mental Health Awareness Month, Health Alliance for Austin Musicians, and the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center for Hispanic Heritage Month. The 2022 series will expand upon these strategic community partnerships to grow awareness and attendance for this series across all sectors of the city.

*Flow and Thrive Series

TTF will follow existing City of Austin guidelines for the permitting of paid yoga, wellness, and exercise classes within a defined portion of the parkland adjacent to the Trail. TTF is currently exploring local partnerships and sponsorship opportunities to provide similar classes that would be free and open to the public featuring different types of exercise, as well as health and wellness programming. These are expected to be monthly events and will not require any level of closure. The series will be developed to encourage all age and ability levels to participate and will highlight many underutilized areas of the Trail.

*Fortlandia

In the winter of 2021/2022 TTF installed a second location of Fortlandia - a collection of forts designed by local architects, designers, and artists, designed to transport viewers to imaginary worlds and spark an appreciation for art and nature. This installation allows even more people the chance to engage and enjoy nature, and activates additional green space along the Trail.

Previously, TTF unveiled territories in the spring of 2021, an urban greenspace experience on the east side of the Trail at Lakeshore Park. territories. was part of the very popular Fortlandia event in 2020 at the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, and the installation was re-imagined to reflect the site on the Butler Trail in partnership with the Austin Parks and Recreation Department.

*Kids Adopt a Garden Program

TTF's Kids Adopt-a-Garden at Metz Recreation Center will continue in 2022 to focus on providing a space for local elementary school students and children to experience the joys of the outdoors and learn about the environment through hands-on activities. The program introduces children to all facets of gardening including planting, watering, weeding, and harvesting, as well as important concepts such as pollination, composting, and the differences between native and invasive species.

Kids, some of whom may not have any gardening experience, get the chance to learn about their natural environment and explore it in a new, hands-on way. The program works to encourage curiosity in growing their own food and learning about new species of edible plants that they otherwise wouldn't be introduced to.



*Educational Scavenger Hunt(s)

The Trees of the Trail scavenger hunt offers a new way to explore the Roy and Ann Butler Trail. Trail users of all ages are encouraged to find clues posted at various historical and notable features of the Trail; there, they follow the instructions to discover unique trees, learning about Austin history and native plant life along the way. Trail users can find virtual and printable maps and clues online and printed maps have been distributed to local libraries and schools. This scavenger hunt will be updated and maintained through 2022 and will potentially be expanded to include discreet loop maps and other educational information.

*Tune into the Trail

Tune in to the Trail is an innovative educational program developed through a partnership between The Trail Foundation and the Austin Independent School District. The program, while still in its pilot phase, brings customized nature-based learning to the 2nd graders at Oak Springs Elementary, a Title I school in East Austin. The Trail Foundation's conservation staff and key AISD staff spend time every week introducing students to different parts of the Butler Trail at Lady Bird Lake. The weekly lessons help support the learning goals of Oak Springs teachers and staff.

*Other Family in Nature Programs

TTF has introduced several programs aimed at engaging children and families in nature on the Trail. Some of those efforts we expect to continue in 2021/2022 include:

- Teen Eco-Club, a weekly 1-hour program where teens engage in ecological restoration work including planting, data collection, invasive removals, and bio blitzes
- Seasonal family-based public ecological restoration volunteer events that allow volunteers to plant native saplings and plants, spread mulch, seed wildflower meadows, and more
- Seasonal ecological restoration school service projects (3-5 per season spring/fall depending on demand from local schools)

Other potential future family events could include but are not limited to:

- Wildflower photo day(s)
- Holiday photo popup series
- Nature walks and bio blitzes

3.4 Partnership Programming

Formal Partnership with Keep Austin Beautiful

TTF and Keep Austin Beautiful (KAB) will continue to partner around the series of volunteer events. The collaboration between the two entities will amplify the efforts and mission of each organization. The partnership will include the following elements:

- TTF will lead 1-2 volunteer restoration projects during and as a part of all Clean Lady Bird Lake events - 6 annually.
- TTF and KAB will collaborate on the twice-monthly small volunteer events described in the Clean Lady Bird Lake RFP - 24 annually.
- KAB will coordinate with TTF on volunteer education and training directly related to working on and around the shoreline of Lady Bird Lake.

Additionally, TTF shares its annual volunteer schedule with KAB in an effort to avoid conflicts with the Clean Lady Bird Lake Program.

Additional Partner Programming and Collaboration

In the spirit of community driven stewardship, TTF will continue to collaborate with nonprofit entities whose missions overlap in the TTF focus area. These collaborations are ongoing and span project as well as programming in the space. Current partners include but are not limited to:

- Downtown Austin Alliance
- Waterloo Greenway
- Hill Country Conservancy
- It's My Park Day (Austin Parks Foundation)
- Shoal Creek Conservancy

3.5 Arts+Culture Vision Plan

The Arts+Culture on the Trail plan for the Trail at Lady Bird Lake is in its early phases of development and community engagement. The Trail Foundation has organized a talented team of artists, art professionals, community engagement specialists, and innovators to lead this exciting project. This is more than a visionary plan for art exhibits on the Trail. It's a plan for the Trail and its users, a vital and complex place and community supporting arts and culture activities.

At the heart of this planning effort, The Trail Foundation seeks to answer the questions of how Arts and Cultural strategies can:

- Broadly serve Trail users and the surrounding communities
- Enhance the experience of users along the Trail
- Support the experience of the natural environment and resources
- Represent the character and diversity of Austin
- Align with other organizational and municipal plans and strategies that affect the Trail
- Increase diversity of Trail users through relevant art and cultural attractions — expanding on who is using the Trail and who feels welcomed
- Assist The Trail Foundation in meeting their broad goals as an organization

TTF balances many overlapping needs, goals, and user populations. The Arts and Culture team will work to strike a balance in serving these pursuits. Elements to be addressed in the plan will include permanent and temporary work; ecology and nature; and performance art and cultural programming. The team will also work to develop an understanding of the role that arts and culture can take in enhancing the experience along the Trail for the different communities and populations that TTF serves. The project will consider the diverse needs, priorities, and power structures that impact these communities and explore how to use arts and culture to further provide equitable access and experiences for all trail users and communities.

3.6 Public Information Activities & Trail Signage

From an extensive and active social media following to semi-permanent signage, visibility at all programming events, and strong public relations visibility, TTF is in a unique position to share information about the Trail to the community as a whole. This greatly expands PARD’s ability to communicate directly to Trail and park users.

No Scooters on the Trail

In 2019 TTF became hyper-focused on PARD and their pilot program that has banned the use of E-Scooters on the Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail, and now plans to continue educating Trail users about the illegal use of electric scooters on the Trail. Previously, TTF created “No scooters on the Trail” T-shirts and a humorous PSA video to create awareness, and more recently has installed semi-permanent signage reminding Trail users that these are not permitted.

Trail Etiquette

We want every trail user to have a wonderful hassle-free experience on the trail. TTF will continue to use limited semi-permanent signage and online presence to encourage Trail users to be mindful of others and their user experience when on the trail.



3.7 Revenue Generating Events

Due to expanded operations and maintenance provided for the Butler Trail and adjacent parkland as outlined in the TTF POMA, and to provide expanded programming and community engagement, TTF's development opportunities and on-Trail need to increase. This will include new sources of revenue/earned income such as concessions and on-Trail events.

TTF will utilize revenue earned from the use of park space for event rentals, third party rentals and concessions to directly benefit the park and Trail via operations, maintenance, programming, or park improvement. These funds will not be used for the salary of the CEO or any development efforts, which will be exclusively funded through private philanthropic dollars.

Popup Fundraisers

TTF's popup fundraisers on the Trail will consist of a ticketed multi-day fundraising event to benefit the park and Trail via TTF operations. Location is to be determined based on project construction schedules but will be designated by those spaces in Section 3.1 which are considered current event locations along the Trail.

Membership Events and Donor Receptions

Multiple informal membership recruitment events will be hosted in areas where TTF has current and future capital projects. If alcohol is going to be served, limited fencing will be installed to align with city and state regulations.

4.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

TTF's community engagement efforts support an Austin community that is connected to the Trail, adjacent parkland, facilities, and programs. User engagement is one of the top six priorities identified in the TTF Strategic Plan. The Trail will always be public parkland and will always belong to the people. To serve Austin in all its diversity and strengthen our social fabric, the Trail must be a welcoming and engaging place for all. TTF, therefore, continuously works to improve, maintain, and program the Trail such that it will provide enhanced and more inclusive user experiences. TTF is continuing to develop and implement community engagement and programming that serves everyone, especially attuned to those who have been historically underserved.

Project community engagement typically includes the following components (which shift based on safety of in-person events):

- 3 Community Engagement Events (in person/on site or virtual/Zoom)
 - Dates approved by PARD
 - Public announcements of dates are made a minimum of 4 weeks in advance
- 1-2 Surveys - This can be used as an event above.
- All engagement efforts are announced through dedicated TTF emails, targeted email lists, social media, site signage, TTF website, PARD website, and Nextdoor. Other options include direct mailers, community fliers or large graphic site signage.
- Spanish translation & interpretation
 - Surveys, social media posts, signage, meeting materials, virtual meetings

Similar community engagement will be undertaken in regards to programming once the pilot year series has been initiated. Feedback will be collected from all artists and partners involved in the Music on the Trail series, for example, at the end of 2021 in order to steer the direction for the series in 2022.

Community Engagement with PARD

Coordination and cooperation with PARD has been a critical success factor of TTF's project community engagement and our ability to directly involve Austin residents in our work since the beginning of our partnership. We coordinate outreach directly with PARD's Communications & Engagement Unit and maintain consistency with the City of Austin's Public Participation Principles of accessibility and inclusion, accountability, collaboration, consistency, respect, and stewardship.

5.0 DEFINITIONS

5.1 Levels of Event Use

Based on the [Parkland Event Task Force Final Report and Recommendations](#) (relevant to Austin City Council Resolution No. 20150305-025), the following definitions are used to describe levels of event use:

- Open – full accessibility – normal day in the parkland without event use.
- In Use – no fences, no barriers, significant portion of the park reserved/impacted by the event. Includes increased pedestrian and vehicular activity.
- Partially Open – greater than 50% available without a ticket and unfenced
- Minimally Open – more than 50% closed, only available to ticketed patrons
- Closed – no accessibility – ticketed participation only